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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/B

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SUBJECT: BIOS OF KASHMIR-RELATED LEADERS -- PART 2

Classified By: A/Polcouns Matt Boyse for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

1. (C) This is the second of a three-part biographic report compiling information and impressions A/Polcouns gained from contact with Indian Kashmir-related politicians, government officials, separatists, academics, journalists, NGO activists, and others during a 2002-2005 assignment at Embassy New Delhi. The contents of this message, which includes bios on the individuals below, will be posted on the Embassy Siprnet site:

-- Prof. Abdul Ghani BHAT, Executive Member, All-Parties Hurriyat Conference  
-- Moulvi Abbas ANSARI, Executive Member, All-Parties Hurriyat Conference  
-- Bilal LONE, Executive Member, All-Parties Hurriyat Conference  
-- Shabir Ahmad SHAH, Chairman, J&K Democratic Freedom Party  
-- Yasin MALIK, President, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF)  
-- Syed Ali Shah GEELANI, President, Tehreek-e-Hurriyat  
-- Sajjad LONE, President, People,s Conference  
-- Narinder Nath VOHRA, GOI Interlocutor on J&K  
-- Muzaffar Hussain BEIG, Minister for Finance, Planning and Development, Law and Parliamentary Affairs, J&K  
-- Peerzada Mohammad SAYEED, J&K Minister for Rural Development

2. (U) The biographies for the foregoing follow below:

Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhat  
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Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhat  
(Phonetic: BuT)

Executive Member, All-Parties Hurriyat Conference

Addressed as: Prof. Bhat

(C) Former Chairman of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), Prof. Bhat (68) is its most articulate spokesman and "elder statesman." He has little political following in the Valley, but derives his influence because he is so erudite in English and is very well educated. He is friendly and open to contact with the Embassy. Favorably disposed towards the United States, he has been critical of many USG policies, but is careful about proclaiming them publicly. For example, he is pleased that the Taliban is no longer governing Afghanistan, and never liked Saddam Hussain (for the latter,s support of India in the Kashmir matter), but has been critical of our Iraq policy.

(C) Bhat is President of the Muslim Conference, an APHC constituent organization he revived in 1998 after it had been abandoned by the late Sheikh Abdullah in the 1940s. Bhat became a public figure in 1986 when he was fired from his position as Professor and Head of the Department of Persian at Baramulla College on charges of corruption and for raising the banner of revolt against the J&K government. After his dismissal, he formed a union called the Muslim Employees Front, which later merged into a broader alliance -- the Muslim United Front -- that contested the (flawed) Legislative Assembly elections against Farooq Abdullah,s National Conference (NC) in 1987. Bhat was jailed in 1987 for agitating against those rigged polls by the ruling NC and its Congress ally.

(C) There has been a perceptible change in Prof. Bhat,s political views in the last several years as he has evolved from a pro-Islamabad hardliner advocating Kashmir,s accession to Pakistan to an outspoken opponent of pro-Pakistan hardliner SAS Geelani. An advocate of dialogue, he took part in the Hurriyat,s talks with DPM LK Advani in 2004 and supports the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad Bus.

(U) Prof. Bhat has been arrested several times since 1985. In 1990, he was arrested and imprisoned for three years. Terrorists assassinated his brother as a warning.

(U) Bhat was born in 1933 in the village of Botingu, near Sopore, where he received his early education. He holds an MA Persian from Aligarh Muslim University and also studied law (and practiced law in 1962-63). He does not have travel

documents and has only been outside India only twice in his life, a visit to Kathmandu to attend a Pugwash Conference in December 2004 and to Pakistan in June 2005. He speaks excellent English.

Moulvi Abbas ANSARI

Moulvi Abbas ANSARI  
(Phonetic: an-SAW-Ree)

Executive Member, All-Parties Hurriyat Conference  
Addressed as: Moulvi Ansari

(C) Moulvi Ansari (70) is the most prominent Shia separatist in the Kashmiri Valley. Chairman of moderate faction of Hurriyat from the time of its split in September 2003 until July 2004, when he resigned to improve the chances for APHC unity under the leadership of Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, he was widely considered a weak leader. He has very limited appeal in Srinagar. He has been open to contact with Embassy officers, but is not comfortable speaking in English and usually lets others do the talking.

(C) Ansari is Founder President of the Anjuman-e-Itehadul Muslimeen, a religio-political group dominated by Shiite Muslims in the Valley, a constituent of the Hurriyat, and Chief Patron of the J&K Liberation Council. He entered politics in Kashmir upon his return from Najaf (Iraq) where he reportedly studied Islamic law at premier Shiite institutions during the period 1963-71.

(U) He understands English, but prefers to speak Urdu and Kashmiri or to let others do the talking. In official meetings he dresses like a religious Shia leader.

Bilal LONE

Bilal LONE  
(Phonetic: Lone)

Executive Member, All-Parties Hurriyat Conference  
Addressed as: Mr. Lone

(C) Bilal Lone, in his mid-forties, is the oldest son of Abdul Ghani Lone, the legendary Kashmiri separatist. Along with his younger brother, Sajjad, Bilal took over the leadership of the People,s Conference, after their father,s assassination on May 21, 2002, but they became estranged in 2004 over the struggle for his legacy. Bilal is very friendly and open to contact with Embassy officers, and favorably disposed towards the United States.

(C) Bilal has been in an awkward political situation after his mother endorsed his brother Sajjad as People,s Conference (PC) President, but the moderate faction of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) recognizes Bilal,s faction of People,s Conference as its constituent member. This has produced a deep split in the PC, and in the Lone family, and the brothers are reportedly no longer on speaking terms.

(C) Bilal is one of the "four musketeers," the top leaders of the moderate APHC (along with Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Prof AG Bhat, and Maulvi Ansari). He hates pro-Pakistan hardliner SAS Geelani, whom he holds at least partly responsible for his father,s assassination, and for the former, severe interpretation of Islam, and refers to him regularly in profane terms.

(C) The PC is the most inclined of any of the APHC or other separatist groups to enter the political process with India, having decided to participate by proxy in the landmark 2002 State Legislative Assembly elections. Bilal,s has political support in the Kupwara district of the Valley.

(C) Bilal is a very liberal Muslim who likes the good life. A political moderate and a realist who advocates dialogue but who has an unusually strong Kashmiri identity and sense of wrongs dealt to Kashmiris by the Indian state.

(C) Lone spends much time on his business interests, one of which imports used clothes from the U.S. for sale in India. Bilal, his wife, and two children live in a very large house in an outlying area of Srinagar, adjacent to the equally large house in which his brother Sajjad resides. Bilal travels on an Indian passport. He speaks very good English.

Shabir Ahmad SHAH

Shabir Ahmad SHAH  
(Phonetic: Saw-h)

Chairman, Jammu & Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party  
Addressed as: Mr. Shah

(C) Often called the "Nelson Mandela of Kashmir" for his long struggle for Kashmiri independence and nearly 20 years in prison, Shabir (50) has become a moderate since his release in 1994. The first separatist leader to enter into talks with India, s first Kashmir Interlocutor, KC Pant, in 2001, Shabir has suffered for his moderation by being branded by anti-India Kashmiris as "nave," because that dialogue produced no results. He remains a player in the Valley because of his name recognition and long struggle against India, but is not a constituent member of the main Kashmiri separatist group, the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC). He is open to contact with Embassy officers, and looks to the US to press India to compromise with the Kashmiris.

(C) In conversations, Shabir is longwinded, prone to dwell on ancient history, and disinclined to take discussion beyond the Kashmir issue. (Unlike most major separatists) he also immediately informs the press after meetings with Embassy officers, in order to demonstrate to the reading public that foreign diplomats take him seriously.

(C) Shabir continues to advocate dialogue with India, but on the condition that he receives a formal invitation from New Delhi, which he is persuaded has treated him shabbily. He made a major compromise by accepting Pant, s invitation for dialogue, and bitterly resents having been "hung out to dry" by the GOI, which has contributed to his loss of influence. He remains a powerful speaker (in Urdu).

(C) After initial reluctance, Shabir and his first political party, the "Peoples League," joined the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) in 1995, but he has always had a difficult relationship with other separatists. He sees himself as the Kashmiri leader who has suffered the longest for the cause, and regards many of the Hurriyat leaders as "Johnnie come latelies," or lacking leadership qualities.

(C) He took a previous risk for dialogue in 1996 when the APHC refused to meet Ambassador Wisner in Srinagar (Shabir was the only separatist leader who met him). This exacerbated differences with the APHC and led him to quit the group (he may have been expelled). This led to splits in his party, which caused him to launch the J&K Democratic Freedom Party in 1998. Because of this and his bad experiences with KC Pant, and PM VP Singh whom he also met, Shabir is unusually sensitive about obtaining assurances about GOI intentions before he will resume any talks with New Delhi.

(U) Shabir was married in 1997. His wife is a medical doctor. New Delhi has refused to issue him a passport, which has prevented him from traveling abroad. Although he understands English, he prefers to speak Urdu and Kashmiri.

Yasin MALIK  
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Yasin MALIK  
(Phonetic: Ma-lick)

President, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front

Addressed as: Mr. Malik

(C) President of the oldest and most influential individual Kashmiri separatist organization, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), Yasin (39) is a former militant who has renounced violence in favor of dialogue and peaceful agitation for an independent Kashmir. While a leader of the armed struggle, he has killed in the name of Kashmir, but has become an advocate of non-violence since coming in from the cold. He is open to contact with Embassy officers.

(C) From Srinagar, s congested and poor Maisuma district (a hotbed of separatist sentiment often referred to as &the Kashmir Gaza8), Malik joined the Kashmir independence struggle as a teenager, first with the Islamic Students, League (1985-1987). He was one of the polling agents for Mohammad Yusuf Shah (alias Syed Salahuddin), who ran for a seat in the J&K Legislative Assembly in the 1987 state elections, but whose loss as a result of rigging caused him to take up arms against India. Shah later became the Supreme Commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen and the head of the Muzaffarabad-based United Jihad Council.

(C) After the 1987 polls, Malik was imprisoned for a short time. Following his release, he and four friends crossed over to Pakistani Kashmir where he received small arms training and joined the JKLF, headed by Amanullah Khan. Returning to the Valley in 1988, he began a full-fledged armed struggle, becoming JKLF Chief Commander after the death of Ashfaq Majeed in a grenade explosion. Yasin was arrested on August 6, 1990 and was released from prison for years later, after which he has eschewed violence. The JKLF is considerably weakened since the early 1990s. It has split

and suffered defections of key leaders and advisors in the Valley, as well as among supporters and sympathizers abroad. It is not possible to say with complete assurance, which of the JKLF organizations in Pakistani Kashmir and abroad accept his leadership.

(C) In 1995, Malik developed serious differences with Amanullah Khan, after which he split the Valley-based organization off from the Pakistan-based JKLF. He reluctantly joined the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), but has always had an uneasy relationship with its leaders, partly for ideological reasons (he favors an independent Kashmir), but also because he has a difficult personality and thinks he has suffered more for the cause than other. After the Hurriyat split into moderate and hardline factions in September 2003, Yasin kept out of both. He also opposed Hurriyat dialogue with DPM LK Advani during the NDA government in 2004 and has focused on a campaign to gather signatures which calls for Kashmiris to be involved in the peace talks between India and Pakistan. He now has some 1.5 million, which he exhibited in April 2005 at the Gandhi Peace Foundation in Delhi, impressive undertaking which is the only clear evidence by any Kashmiri separatist of grassroots support.

(C) Malik has become increasingly bitter in recent years, on the grounds that Kashmiris are being ignored by India and Pakistan, and that President Musharraf has distanced himself from the Kashmiri cause. Following an unsatisfactory meeting with Musharraf in New Delhi in April 2005, Yasin announced that if Kashmiris are not be involved in the peace process, he would launch a non-violent movement in both sides of Kashmir. He is also annoyed about the PDP (Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and Mehbooba Sayeed) taking credit for the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad Bus.

(C) Moody and temperamental, it is often difficult to have a dialogue with Malik because of his gloomy personality. A bachelor, Yasin has had a series of health problems, a result of his imprisonment, including kidney problems facial palsy. This requires him to be in New Delhi regularly for treatment. He speaks good English and considers himself something of an intellectual, despite his lack of formal education (he claims his dream job is to be a headmaster at a boarding school).

(C) Born on April 3, 1966, Yasin was interested in a career as a model before the rigged 1987 elections changed his life direction, according to one journalist who knows him well. He has traveled to U.S. at least twice, ostensibly for medical reasons, but he has also engaged in separatist politics there. New Delhi has not renewed his passport. He smokes quite heavily and is a vegetarian. He speaks very good English.

Syed Ali Shah GEELANI  
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Syed Ali Shah GEELANI  
(Phonetic: Gee-Law-Nee)

President, Tehreek-e-Hurriyat

Addressed as: Mr. Geelani

(C) The most rigid and uncompromising pro-Pakistan Kashmiri separatist, Geelani (76) split off from the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) in September 2003 to form the Tehreek-e-Hurriyat after differences with the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) and more moderate APHC leaders over strategy and tactics became too great. He has spent more than ten years in different prisons inside and outside J&K for espousing Kashmir's accession to/merger with Pakistan. The Embassy has maintained a "no contact" policy with him since 2001 because of his continuing ties with terrorist groups in the Valley and his refusal to renounce violence. Most major Embassies follow our lead, but a small number of human rights and NGO activists meet him.

(C) The most hawkish of all non-militant separatists, Geelani calls for the Kashmir issue to be resolved by implementation of UNSC Resolutions from the 1940s and early 1950s. He opposes all bilateral dialogue with New Delhi, which he says is not sincere in resolving the Kashmir issue, on the grounds that unless Pakistan is involved, no tangible results can be expected. His opposition to all participation in the electoral process split the Hurriyat in 2003 after moderates (Mirwaiz, Prof Bhat, Bilal Lone and Maulvi Ansari) rejected his demand for the expulsion of the People's Conference for participating in the 2002 state elections by proxy.

(C) Geelani joined JI in 1950, and was first arrested in August 1962 for separatist activities. During his 13-month imprisonment, his father died; Indian authorities, refusal to allow him to attend the funeral cemented his anti-India views.

(C) Geelani has in the past accepted India,s sovereignty over J&K, contesting the Legislative Assembly elections thrice (1972, 1977 and 1987) and winning all, the first two on a Jamaat ticket and the third as candidate of the Muslim United Front (MUF). He resigned from the Assembly in 1989 after the insurgency began.

(C) As India and Pakistan have continued their rapprochement, Geelani has become increasingly angry with President Musharraf for allegedly "ignoring the core issue of Kashmir." Geelani feels betrayed, as he is determined to go down in the history books as the one Kashmiri who has refused to compromise with India.

(C) Geelani was born in Zoori Munz village, in Bandipora (north Baramulla District) on September 27, 1929. He suffers from a variety of kidney and heart ailments, a consequence of the more than 10 years he has spent in prison for espousing the cause of accession to Pakistan. The Indian government saved his life in 2003, flying him on a government plane from prison in Ranchi, Bihar to Mumbai for special medical treatment. His English is good. He has two sons and several daughters. One son is studying medicine in Islamabad, Pakistan. His Indian passport has been impounded. A conservative Muslim, he prefers not to shake hands with women.

Sajjad LONE

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Sajjad LONE  
(Phonetic: Lone)

President, People,s Conference

Addressed as: Mr. Lone

(C) Along with his older brother, Bilal, Sajjad Lone (38) jointly took over the leadership of the separatist People,s Conference (PC) party after their father, the legendary Kashmiri separatist Abdul Ghani Lone, was assassinated by hardline pro-Pakistan terrorists on May 21, 2002. The two brothers then engaged in an intense struggle over who will inherit his father,s mantle, which Sajjad won after his mother endorsed him in 2003 as his father,s true heir. Sajjad is very friendly and open to contact with Embassy officers, and is favorably disposed towards the United States. A liberal Muslim, he has moderate views on lifestyle and politics and advocates dialogue with India. He is the most modern thinking Kashmiri separatist.

(C) Although Sajjad inherited his father,s legacy, the moderate faction of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) recognizes Bilal as PC President. This has cemented the deep split in Lone family, and the brothers are reportedly not on speaking terms.

(C) The Hurriyat split in September 2003 on the issue of People,s Conference,s proxy participation in 2002 landmark state elections. Hardliners led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani demanded that the PC and the brothers be expelled from the APHC, but the moderates (Mirwaiz, Prof Bhat, Maulvi Ansari and the Lones) resisted, whereupon Geelani took his group out of the Hurriyat, and it has remained deeply split ever since. Sajjad,s popularity is limited to pockets in the Kupwara district in North Kashmir.

(C) He also maintains contact with Indian officials like former RAW Chief and Vajpayee PMO Kashmir Officer on Special Duty AS Dulat and Kashmir Interlocutor NN Vohra.

(C) Before entering politics, Sajjad had business interests in Dubai. He still spends considerable time on his business. He studied in the UK, where he obtained a degree in Psychology. His wife, Asma, is a Pakistani national and the daughter of politician Amanullah Khan, who heads the separatist JKLF in Pakistani Kashmir. The marriage is reportedly a love marriage. The two have twins, born in 2004. She spends a lot of time in Pakistan. The two live in an imposing house in the outskirts of Srinagar, adjacent to an equally large house occupied by his brother.

(C) Both Sajjad and his wife, Asma, have intellectual personalities and have written for Pakistani and Indian newspapers on the Kashmir issue. Unlike Bilal, he is very out of favor with Islamabad, and is not invited to Pakistan High Commission events.

(U) Sajjad travels on an Indian passport. He speaks excellent English.

N. N. VOHRA

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Narinder Nath VOHRA  
(Phonetic: VohRaa)

GOI Interlocutor on Jammu & Kashmir (since February 2003)

Addressed as: Mr. Vohra

(C) After a long distinguished government career, former DPM Advani brought NN Vohra out of retirement in February 2003 to serve as Interlocutor on Jammu and Kashmir and to prepare/lead a dialogue with the Kashmiri separatists. This vision has not materialized, after the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) refused to deal with him, considering him to be "senior enough" and "political," and causing him to become akin to Chief Kashmir Advisor to the Home Minister. He is open to contact with the Embassy and does not stand on protocol (i.e. will receive a First Secretary).

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(C) Before his retirement, Vohra held many of the most important positions in the Indian civil service. He came into prominence in the early 1990s when he was the most senior official in the Defense and Home Ministries, and after he headed the "Vohra Committee" appointed to investigate the nexus between politicians and criminals. From 1997-98, he was Principal Secretary to PM IK Gujral. He possesses a broad range of administrative experience and is well connected in the bureaucracy and politically. He is also a former member of the National Security Advisory Board.

(U) Vohra was born May 5, 1936 into an elite Punjabi Hindu family. He holds a Master's degree from the University of Punjab. Vohra received training in Development Administration at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi. He joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1959, and served his home (Punjab) cadre for over three and half decades. Some of the positions he has held include:

- Principal Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office: 1997-98
- Director, India International Center: 1995-97
- Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs: 1993-94
- Secretary, Ministry of Defense: 1990-93
- Secretary, Department of Production Supply: 1989-90
- Additional Secretary, Ministry of Defense: 1986-89
- Joint Secretary, Ministry of Defense: 1985-86
- Financial Commissioner and Secretary, Government of Punjab: 1984-85
- On deputation to the World Health Organization: 1982-84
- Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare: 1977-82
- Commissioner/Secretary, Housing & Local Government, Punjab 1976-77
- Secretary, Urban Development, Punjab: 1973-76

(C) Vohra's wife, Usha, is also a distinguished civil servant. He enjoys classical music, folk dances, and good literature. He has traveled extensively throughout Europe, the Americas, and Asia. He speaks excellent English, Hindi and Punjabi. In conversations, he is prone to wander off topic, but is very well informed and shares information.

Muzaffar Hussain BEIG

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J&K Minister for Finance, Planning and Development, Law and Parliamentary Affairs

(C) Beig (59) is the most powerful minister in Mufti's Cabinet, who combines intellectual brilliance, worldliness, a reformist orientation, and close personal ties to Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. After receiving an LL.M. from Harvard Law School in 1974, he worked in the US for five years before returning to J&K. He was a student leader, joining the separatist People's Conference headed by the late Abdul Ghani Lone, and rising to become its Vice Chairman. From 1985-87, he was Advocate General in J&K. Beig unsuccessfully contested the Lok Sabha elections in 1998. He joined People's Democratic Party soon after and won a seat in the 2002 state Legislative Assembly polls from Baramulla. His official residence, adjacent to the Grand Palace Hotel high above Gupkar Road in Srinagar, used to be a notorious detention center operated by the security forces in the early years of the insurgency. His staff makes the most delicious fresh apple juice. He was born on August 2, 1946. Divorced, he has a reputation in Srinagar as a man-about-town who enjoys the company of beautiful women. He speaks excellent English.

Peerzada Mohammad SAYEED

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Minister for Rural Development

(C) President of J&K Congress Party, Sayeed (52) behaves like a traditional Congress machine politician, one who asks his staff to put on his socks and shoes for him. He has been

with Congress his entire career, beginning in 1968. He was a Minister of State with the National Conference-Congress government in 1987. In the 2002 state polls, he braved terrorist threats in the volatile Kokernag constituency in South Kashmir and was inducted into the Cabinet on account of his loyalty to the party. Prior to his current appointment, he was a senior Vice President of the state unit of the Congress party. His English is good.  
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